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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Middle East - Iraq - Syria
Trade - WTO And Agricultural Subsidies UNESCO- Cultural
Diversity
PARIS - Friday, October 21, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Middle East - Iraq - Syria
Trade - WTO And Agricultural Subsidies
UNESCO- Cultural Diversity

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

An array of domestic social and economic stories dominate today's front pages, but democratization in the Middle East is a major international story: Syria and the Mehliis report on Hariri's assassination is front-paged in Le Figaro which also devotes its editorial to Washington's "diplomatic approach" of the Syrian issue. In his weekly wrap up column in Le Figaro Ivan Rioufol reviews the "democratic headway" made in Iraq, but also in other parts of the region. Rioufol describes Iraq's "other reality" and criticizes the "pacifists who have picked the wrong enemy in Bush as the warmonger." The weekly magazine Paris Match editorial is a sweet and sour take on the "advances" made in Iraq, in spite of "the brutal and unfair war" being waged "without intelligence." (See Part C) The Abbas visit to Washington is reported in Le Figaro and Liberation, and the support of President Bush widely noted.

France's position against Brussels on trade and agricultural subsidies continue to elicit articles, commentaries and interviews. Le Monde stresses France's "isolation" and President Chirac's "mistaken battle" as an answer to "France's 'no' vote on the EU Constitution." Le Figaro Economie which quotes Robert Portman from Geneva also stresses that France's "pressures" to keep agriculture out of the WTO negotiations is creating "a European chaos which is worrying the rest of the world." (See Part C) In La Croix French Trade Minister Christine Lagarde gives one more interview on the controversy: "We are convinced that when it comes to certain agricultural products, the EU Trade Commissioner is outside his mandate. We do not want the negotiations on agriculture to continue at this time."

Le Monde devotes a front-page op-ed to cultural diversity and Washington's "hostility" to the UNESCO convention. (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Middle East - Iraq - Syria

"Syria's Hour Has Come"
Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/21): "El-Assad's future may be hanging on the outcome of the investigation into Hriiri's assassination. Iraq, Syria: two very different approaches but the same desire in Washington to get things to change radically in that part of the world. It would seem that the Americans are making every effort not to repeat past mistakes. With France's support, diplomacy has taken over in the Syrian crisis. Pressure on the Syrian regime will continue and it is hard to see how Damascus will be able to overcome its isolation. Secretary Rice previously acquired the support not only of Paris but also of Moscow. The next step at the UNSC could be about sanctions, but as Paris has indicated, on the condition that they be directed against the regime and not the civilian population. Thus, contrary to what transpired in the Iraqi crisis, an international system is being implemented without tension and in the framework of the UN to force the Syrian regime to change its stance. One hopes that el-Assad will cooperate."

"Iraq: The Other Reality"
Ivan Rioufol in right-of-center Le Figaro (10/21): "For the anti-Bushists, it is a bitter pill to swallow: the Iraqis have accepted the democracy offered by the U.S. History is correcting the caricature of President Bush and his single-mindedness. Anti-Americanism makes one blind: and although there is insecurity in the Middle East, it has not kept the Israelis and the Palestinians from moving ahead, or the

Lebanese from opening their eyes, Libya from disarming, and calm from coming to Afghanistan. The people know who their enemies are, and by voting they have identified them. By continuing to point a finger at Bush as a warmonger, the 'pacifists' have picked the wrong enemy. He and his allies have managed to topple a tyrant and engaged in a battle against Islamic imperialism."

"The Door Is Slightly Ajar"

Alain Genestar in right-of-center weekly Paris Match (10/21): "We must not, through our ingrained anti-Americanism, insult the millions of Iraqis who have voted in spite of terrorist threats. One can be radically set against this war in Iraq - as we are - against the brutal and unfair way the war was decided. One can criticize President Bush yet without contradiction acknowledge that the vote in Iraq is good news, the first good news since the start of the war. Some will say that the Iraqi Constitution is too religious. What they mean is too Muslim. But Iraq has a culture and a religion that must be respected. This is a Western and racist reflex against the 'Muslim' nature of the Constitution. Yet we are not shocked when the American President swears on the Bible. Democracy as we would wish it and as the formerly oppressed Iraqis have dreamed it, is not for tomorrow. And neither is peace. This terrible war, which everyone continues to criticize because it kills innocents and serves as a pretext for terrorism, will by force end one day. By voting, the Iraqis have taken the first step."

Trade - WTO And Agricultural Subsidies

"France Isolated"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (10/21): "The confrontation between President Chirac and the European Commission is taking on a new dimension just when Europe is stalemated after the votes on the EU Constitution. and after the confrontations between Paris and London over the joint EU agricultural policy. The fact that Mandelson is close to Tony Blair has added to the French President's bad mood. But beyond this, the way Chirac is demonstrating his opposition to liberalization is his answer to the French voters who said 'no' to the EU treaty. France has many arguments it can use to defend its position on agriculture. But once again it is practically isolated in this battle. France's continued attacks on Brussels have made it lose some of its power of persuasion. This defensive strategy, inspired by domestic post referendum concerns, is not how France will regain its lead role in Europe."

UNESCO - Cultural Diversity

"Cultural Diversity: A Manifest for A Different Globalization"

Nicole Vulser in left-of-center Le Monde (10/21): "For once the world's most powerful nation culture-wise, the U.S., found itself naked and alone in its vain battle to introduce desperate amendments to try and rid the convention of all substance. Washington's frontal hostility towards the convention is both political and economic. American pressure is strong both at the WTO and in bilateral negotiations. American diplomats and trade representatives are directly involved in defending America's cultural sovereignty around the world in exchange for access to agricultural markets. Until now, in the cultural sector, there was no legislation outside the national framework. Now there is one. The U.S. will not ratify the convention, like the Kyoto protocol. But this convention on cultural diversity exists and will act as reference, a step forward when compared to the previous vacuum." STAPLETON